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# THE BAPTIST HERITAGE

VOLUME XXVII ISSUE 11

NOVEMBER 20, 2003

## The Words Of The Word

The recorded revelation of Deity, the written word of God, this Book of books we call the Bible, opens, "In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light." It is written again, Genesis chapter one, verse six, "And God said, Let there be . . ." The conclusion of verse seven reveals, "And it was so."

The Holy Spirit, using King David the prophet, provides inspired commentary on these verses, "By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth" (Psalm 33:6). While this Psalm is written in a form of Hebraic poetic expression, these words are not merely expressed poetry; this twofold revelation is among the very foundational truths of Scripture. Indeed, no Scripture is more important than this opening declaration of the word of God and these later comments of the Holy Spirit.

This Psalm continues, "He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." The Holy Spirit provides through the Apostle Paul the fullest explanation of the creative act found in Scripture, "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (Hebrews 11:3).

Two separate, but inseparable, aspects are seen in this God-given revelation of the act of creation; these are (1) "By the word of the LORD were the heavens made;" and, "and all the host of them by (2) the breath of his mouth." The Word of the LORD, the Eternal Son of God, was the Creator of all the heavens and all the host of them. This act of the creation of all the heavens and all the host of them was accomplished by the breath of His mouth; that is, the creative tool or force was the spoken word of the Eternal Word. Considering these in the order and with

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# this and that

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The greatest possession that any of us have is the word of God—our personal copy of the Bible. The purchase price (even on the most expensive Cambridge edition available) is so modest and the acquisition of a new copy is so easy that we do not hold

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the ownership of a Bible as precious as did our forefathers. What a tragedy it is that the very abundance of copies of Scripture actually devaluates the existence of those copies. I challenge you to consider what life would be without access to that book you let lie unappreciated and unread day after day.

—Pastor Manley

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### Introduction:

Balaam, as did Demas, disobeyed the LORD his God because Balaam loved the present world. Balaam, unlike Moses, desired the possession of the present temporary material world, the "for a season" treasures of this world, so much that he was willing to sacrifice "the riches of Christ" reserved for the righteous in eternity.

### Point One:

The only way that Balaam could achieve his promotion or gain his reward or receive his wages was to teach Balak how to entice, to allure, to seduce the people of God into disobedience so that they might be cursed.

### Point Two:

The only way that Satan can cause you to die and go to hell is to encourage you through some entanglement or enticement to disregard the word of God and try to work out your own salvation.

The only way that Satan can cause the blood-bought, heaven-bound child of God not to be blessed by the Lord and, instead, to be chastened of God is to entice that child to act in direct disobedience to the revealed word of his Heavenly Father.

### Point Three:

If you are saved, Satan will use the lure, the bait, the temptation of promised promotion or high honor or worthy wages (whether some form of material satisfaction or, as in the case of Israel, sexual gratification), or whatever other inducement he can find to use to bring you into chastisement, so as to cause you grief and so as to bring dishonor to the cause of Christ. It is his design, continuing from the Garden of Eden, to bring you into conflict with the word of Almighty God.

### Invitation:

Therefore, as did Moses of Israel, this preacher calls "heaven and earth to record (as in "write it down") this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."

The word of the LORD was delivered to the saints (Jude 3). It is before us to have and to hold. You may read it for yourself and you should; because you alone will answer to God for yourself. Accept the word of the LORD and there is abundant blessing both in this life and in the life to come. Reject the word of the LORD and your life will be cursed both in time and in eternity.

—Pastor Manley

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do this. Whether he was double-speaking or not is not an issue. It could be that Balaam, who yearned so deeply for the wages, promotion, and reward of the Moabites, never gained any thing personally as a result of showing Balak how to curse Israel. This I know for certain that many of God's children have such a desire for the treasures of this world that they do all they can to attain the good favor of the world and yet it is clear to all that they never profit. David (2 Samuel 12: 14) did not intend to give "aid and comfort" to the enemies of the LORD when he satisfied the lust of his flesh; yet he did exactly that.

2. (2 Peter 2:15) "Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness."

The way of Balaam provides the motivation as to why he first tried to persuade the LORD through special offerings to change His mind, and why, when the LORD would not, Balaam then showed Balak how to seduce Israel. Balaam loved the material wealth, the social honor, and the political promotion he could obtain by aiding Balak.

3. (Jude 1:11) "Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gain-saying of Core."

The error of Balaam was that he somehow convinced himself that he could manipulate Scripture to his advantage and that, in so doing, he could avoid punishment for any disobedience of the word of God. In his mind, after all, he was not himself disobedient and he was not himself causing Israel to sin. All he did, in his mind, was to show Balak that if Israel violated the word of God, Israel would be cursed and not blessed.

It is no coincidence that the last mention of Balaam in the Book of Numbers (31:8), finds Balaam "fellowshipping" with the Midianites just at the time the Israelites are instructed by the LORD to destroy Midian. "Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword." Balaam dies under the judgment of God, among the enemies of God. He had prayed, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" Balaam forgot, however, that he was supposed to live the life of the righteous. Service to God is not limited to the time of dying; it is not the "last rites" of the believer. It is the calling of every believer for every day living.

*If I have presented the truth of the word of God, if you have followed the reasoning of the Scriptures, and if you have listened with your mind and heart, then, you are now ready for the sermon. I have space only for the outline of the sermon.*

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acknowledgment appreciated.

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the distinction of this revelation is important. Nothing about Scripture is accidental; each aspect is intentional and each is designed to convey a specific truth.

- (1) "By the word of the LORD were the heavens made." The Word, the Eternal Son, the One Who would become the Incarnate Son, Who would be made flesh to dwell among us, God manifest in the flesh, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is over all, God blessed for ever, the Eternal Word of the Eternal God, the active Agent in all creation is Himself the Beginning of the creation of God, the Firstborn of every creature. This phrasing does not at all suggest that He Himself was created, but declares emphatically that He Himself was the Creator of all.

The Apostle John is moved to open his gospel by declaring: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made." The eternal song of the redeemed in Heaven will be this very theme. "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Revelation 4:11).

Scripture makes the undeniable affirmation that the Word of God, Who became the Incarnate Son of God, was the Agent or the Instrument of and for the Godhead. The Son of God was the Creator of all creation.

- (2) The second aspect of this revelation, "and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth," declares that all creation was brought to existence, to reality, to being, by the Word through the instrument of His spoken word. The Word, the Divine Agent of Creation, spoke the word that created all creation. Psalm 148:6 affirms the revelation of Psalm 33, "He spake and it was done. He commanded and it stood fast," by declaring, "For he commanded and they were created."

It is the unavoidable conclusion for every honest Bible student that creation was spoken into being. Creation was deliberate, not accidental, directed, not supervised, instantaneous, not progressive, immediate, not delayed, and finished, not started. God created by fiat, by decree, by edict, by proclamation, by command, by spoken word. This ability to create things that are, out of things that are not, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear is an attribute of Deity, and of Deity only. Only Deity can create something using nothing. Only Deity can speak physical matter into existence.

Understanding and believing this basic truth and accepting its full implication produced the faith that moved the Roman centurion of Matthew 8 to say that the Lord Jesus Christ needed to "speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed." His understanding is the reason the Lord Jesus described the faith thus expressed by this centurion greater than any faith He had yet found in Israel. The centurion

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acknowledged that this Man, Jesus of Nazareth, of the house and lineage of David, standing before him on the street of Capernaum is considerably more than some common carpenter's son turned into a self-appointed itinerant rabbi. The Man standing in front of the centurion was God manifest in the flesh; and therefore, since this Man, Jesus, was God, He would be able to create health and wellness by simply speaking the word.

"He commanded and it stood fast," just as the Eternal Word by His word created all creation, all creation is now kept in continued existence through the spoken word of the Eternal Word. Peter is used by the Holy Spirit to demonstrate this in his second epistle, chapter three, "For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water." The original creation was accomplished by the spoken word of the God of Heaven. The good old King James translators showed that they understood this by cross referencing this verse to the creative act recorded in Genesis 1:6,9. The verse continues, "But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." The present world is now being "kept" for a singular purpose, a day of coming judgment; and, the power reserving this world for that day is the spoken word of God, the same spoken word that created the world. The whole of creation, the heavens and the earth, was created by the spoken word of the Lord Jesus, and now, that same creation is being held together by the word of the Lord Jesus.

The Holy Spirit has the Apostle Paul unite both aspects in context in the opening of Hebrews: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds." This is an emphatic declaration that the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ is the Creator.

"Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power." The Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, is declared not only the Creator but also the Keeper, the Upholder, the Sustenance and the Sustainer of all creation.

This is not some vague shadowy concept implied or suggested in a few isolated disconnected passages. Instead, this truth is the message of all Scripture. From Genesis through Revelation, Scripture consistently reveals that the Lord Jesus Christ is both the Divine Agent of all original creation and the One Who now holds the entire whole of creation together. The Holy Spirit emphasizes this fact in Colossians 1:16-17, "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist."

These unequivocal statements ("by him all things were created" and "by him

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with the daughters of Moab. {2} And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods."

The people of Moab no longer are fearful of Israel; instead, Moab now welcomes Israel with "open arms." There is not even a suggestion that Israel has any intention of attacking Moab, rather Israel seemingly has united with Moab. Something obviously produced these massive alterations. We are not told of any causes for the change of mind or either Moab or Israel in the Old Testament. It is apparent that the Moabites involved Israel in idolatry and with immorality; however, both the source that suggested this approach to Israel and the reason why Moab chose to do this are omitted from the chronological report of Numbers. We find only declaration that this occurred and a report of the consequences their action brought upon Israel.

{3} And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel. {4} And the LORD said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the LORD against the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may be turned away from Israel. {5} And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baalpeor: . . . {8} . . . So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel. {9} And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand."

To understand the connection between Balaam and the judicial execution of twenty-four thousand people, we need to place and to read three references from the New Testament between these two chapters. Write these references in the space between these two chapters in your Bible so that you will always have access to them. They alone provide us with the God-given insight as to the source and the cause of the sin of Israel that resulted in more than twenty-four thousand deaths. These references are as follows:

1. (Revelation 2:14) "But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication."

The doctrine of Balaam was the teaching that he gave Balac (This is the New Testament spelling for Balak) that if Moab would persuade or could seduce Israel to violate the word of God, then God would "be compelled" to curse Israel and to remove His blessing.

Next Balaam, indirectly, shows Balak the only basis on which Balak can hope to bring the curse of God upon Israel. {21} He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the LORD his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them." The only way to do bring the curse of God upon Israel is to cause Israel to commit iniquity, violating the law of God, or become perverse, distorting or corrupting the law of God.

I mention in passing that Balaam may or may not have intended to

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"And when Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel, he went not, as at other times, to seek for enchantments, but he set his face toward the wilderness. {2} And Balaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel abiding in his tents according to their tribes; and the spirit of God came upon him. {3} And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said: {4} He hath said, which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open: {5} How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! ... {9} ... Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee."

Balak is not pleased by this and actually moves to threaten Balaam.

"{10} And Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he smote his hands together: and Balak said unto Balaam, I called thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast altogether blessed them these three times. {11} Therefore now flee thou to thy place: I thought to promote thee unto great honour; but, lo, the LORD hath kept thee back from honour."

He then reminds Balaam that it is God Himself Who is preventing Balaam from having the great rewards that Balak desired to give him.

"{12} And Balaam said unto Balak, Spake I not also to thy messengers which thou sentest unto me, saying, {13} If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the LORD, to do either good or bad of mine own mind; but what the LORD saith, that will I speak? {14} And now, behold, I go unto my people: come therefore, and I will advertise thee what this people shall do to thy people in the latter days."

Quickly, note the great prophecy that Balaam is used of the LORD to give. Many Bible scholars believe this is the reference that caused the wise men to anticipate the birth of the King of the Jews.

"{15} And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said: {16} He hath said, which heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the most High, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open: {17} I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel ... {25} And Balaam rose up, and went and returned to his place: and Balak also went his way."

We come now to the very heart of our discussion and a great danger arises. If we are not careful Bereans searching the Scriptures diligently, we will quickly move from verse twenty-five of chapter twenty-four to the first verse of the next chapter and, in doing so, fail to make the proper conclusions.

Notice that the next verses reveal remarkable changes both in the attitude of Moab towards Israel and in the relationship between Israel and Moab. For instance: Numbers 25

"{1} And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom

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all things consist;" and "by the same word [all things] are kept in store," and that He is "upholding all things by the word of his power" are impossible to avoid.

The particular phrase, "the word of his power," from Hebrews 1:3 deserves a most careful, prayerful consideration. It is not written that this upholding of all things by the Lord Jesus is accomplished through "the power of his word," though His word does have omnipotence; instead, it is written "the word of his power" upholds all things. He does indeed have power in His word. He has not just the power of strength that when combined with energy produces force; but He has the four-fold power of authority that is granted by (1) rank, "His Son," (2) position, seated "on the right hand of the Majesty on high," (3) title, "heir of all things," and (4) being, "the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person". This phrase, therefore, claims that He speaks with that unique power of the authority of being of the Godhead. He, as Deity, speaks with the might of omnipotence and the wisdom of omniscience. The very spoken word of the Lord Jesus Christ is, therefore, identified as the power, the might, the energy, the force, the cause, the reason, the authority that holds creation together. The same Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who spoke the word that created, now speaks the word that upholds or sustains or maintains all creation; it is "by him that all things consist."

We speak of the laws of nature, of the laws of physics, of the laws of science and even of specific laws, such as that of inertia, of gravitation, of thermodynamics and so forth; in reality, all of these man conceived "laws" are but the limited attempts by humanity to explain the perceived results of the unlimited activity of "the word of his power" without crediting Him either for the cause or result.

*If I have achieved my purpose thus far, you are beginning (1) to consider the possibility that words consist of much more than meaningful sounds, definable utterances and vibrating vocal cords, (2) to realize the potential that words are active and not passive, and (3) to grasp the probability that if these two thoughts be true, then words have much more than sounds and meanings involved in their use.*

We fail to recognize words for what they actually are, fail to grasp the truth of the nature of words, and fail to see their existence as more than a temporary expression of an idea or emotion. Words have consequences resulting from their utterance.

Words create; words bring thoughts into being, into existence, into reality. Words are the permanent expression of thoughts. Words are not temporary intonations existing merely as if they were only expelled breath appearing for a brief moment on a cold morning then vanishing forever away. To the contrary, once vocalized, words are released to exist forever.

An unknown poet wrote,

*"Boys flying kites pull in their white winged birds,  
But, this you cannot do, when you are flying words.  
Thoughts unexpressed may someday fall back dead,*

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## THE WORDS OF THE WORD

*(Continued from page 5)**But God Himself won't kill them once they are said."*

The Hebrews conveyed this concept by describing words as being instruments or tools similar to those used for labor or war. A word was considered arrow-like. Once launched, a word could not be recalled; the word would, for it must, continue its flight. This explains the reason that when Isaac had given the blessing to Jacob, even though he had done so in error, thinking that he had blessed Esau, his words, like arrows, once spoken had been launched and could not be recalled. They were spoken into existence and, once spoken, the words became permanent. Words are thoughts born, ideas brought into being, concepts given existence. Words endure forever.

Make no mistake, you and I will face all our words in eternity. This future accountability to the Holy God of Heaven for our very words is a solemn thought. No wonder the Apostle James is moved to warn us so bluntly and so forcefully to control our tongues. This is also the reason why the wrong use of words, such as the vain use of God's name, bearing false witness, lying, making a vow and not keeping it, and all such sins are considered so gross and are condemned so sternly in Scripture. Words are not sounds only; they are thoughts brought to existence, endless existence.

The Lord Jesus applied this truth with a most grave warning as recorded in Matthew 12:36-37, "But I say unto you, That every idle (An idle word is not a lazy word or an unemployed word; but a word that is not spoken for its real purpose or true meaning but is used for other purposes, be those careless or deliberate.) . . . That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." The old children's song may seem trite, but it is based on solid doctrine. We should learn to "be careful little mouth what you say."

My purpose, however, is not to concentrate on the words you and I have spoken, or will speak, but to focus our concentrated attention on the very words of God as found in this Book, which we call the Bible, which calls itself, the Scriptures and the word of the LORD, but which, the Lord Jesus Christ identified as His words when He said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away." The Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 24:35, Mark 13:31, Luke 21: 33) is emphatic that His words were never going to cease to be in existence.

Settle this in your heart as an absolute—a permanent, irrevocable, unalterable certainty—for both time and eternity. This book is the very word of the Triune God and in this word, and only in this word, is found, the very words of the Godhead and these words are the only words of this Eternal God of Heaven that you and I will ever know in this world.

This is the Book that came from God and was delivered unto the saints, once for all. This Book itself boldly makes the claim to have been spoken by God. (Deuteronomy 8:3) "And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he

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So, Balaam separates. Could he possibly believe that the LORD does not know that Balak is standing over there by the burnt offerings?

"{16} And the LORD met Balaam, and put a word in his mouth, and said, Go again unto Balak, and say thus. {17} And when he came to him, behold, he stood by his burnt offering, and the princes of Moab with him. And Balak said unto him, What hath the LORD spoken? {18} And he took up his parable, and said, Rise up, Balak, and hear; hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor. {19} God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? {20} Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it."

In verse 19, God is speaking directly to Balak and only indirectly to Balaam. "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" What God has said will be done, shall be done, because He will do it. Speaking is accomplishment; even if the latter does not immediately follow the former. What God has said will be, will be. The authority of Omnipotent Omniscient Deity guarantees it. "Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" That rhetorical question can prompt only one response. "Yes, absolutely, God has spoken and, without any doubt, He Himself shall make it good."

"Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it." Man, whether individually or all humanity collectively, cannot "reverse" God's commandment. As He has said (Job 38:14) to the waves of the seas, "Thus far and no farther," even so, has He said to humanity. When God blesses, man cannot reverse that blessing and when man brings the curse of God upon himself, no man can reverse it.

"{23} Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought! . . . {25} And Balak said unto Balaam, Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all. {26} But Balaam answered and said unto Balak, Told not I thee, saying, All that the LORD speaketh, that I must do? {27} And Balak said unto Balaam, Come, I pray thee, I will bring thee unto another place; peradventure it will please God that thou mayest curse me from thence. {28} And Balak brought Balaam unto the top of Peor, that looketh toward Jeshimon. {29} And Balaam said unto Balak, Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven bullocks and seven rams. {30} And Balak did as Balaam had said, and offered a bullock and a ram on every altar."

Balak was of the persuasion that circumstances could change the word of God. In effect, he believed in situational doctrine. That "wisdom" did not die with Balaam. The contemporary ecumenical movement is built upon this very persuasion. Doctrine does not change with the winds of human situations.

Numbers 24

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the word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak. {39} And Balaam went with Balak, and they came unto Kirjathhuzoth. {40} And Balak offered oxen and sheep, and sent to Balaam, and to the princes that were with him. {41} And it came to pass on the morrow, that Balak took Balaam, and brought him up into the high places of Baal, that thence he might see the utmost part of the people."

That last verse is so very important. Notice that Balaam is taken to the place where sacrifices are offered to Baal and there he sets about to construct his own altars to the LORD. Balaam is mixing his sacrifices to the LORD with those sacrifices offered to Baal. When a person starts down the path of disobedience, the only limit to how far that person may go is the patience of God.

Numbers 23

"{1} And Balaam said unto Balak, Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven oxen and seven rams. {2} And Balak did as Balaam had spoken; and Balak and Balaam offered on every altar a bullock and a ram. {3} And Balaam said unto Balak, Stand by thy burnt offering, and I will go: peradventure the LORD will come to meet me: and whatsoever he sheweth me I will tell thee. And he went to an high place. {4} And God met Balaam: and he said unto him, I have prepared seven altars, and I have offered upon every altar a bullock and a ram. {5} And the LORD put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said, Return unto Balak, and thus thou shalt speak. {6} And he returned unto him, and, lo, he stood by his burnt sacrifice, he, and all the princes of Moab. {7} And he took up his parable, and said, Balak the king of Moab hath brought me from Aram, out of the mountains of the east, saying, Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel. {8} How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the LORD hath not defied? {9} For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. {10} Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his! {11} And Balak said unto Balaam, What hast thou done unto me? I took thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast blessed them altogether. {12} And he answered and said, Must I not take heed to speak that which the LORD hath put in my mouth? {13} And Balak said unto him, Come, I pray thee, with me unto another place, from whence thou mayest see them: thou shalt see but the utmost part of them, and shalt not see them all: and curse me them from thence. {14} And he brought him into the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah, and built seven altars, and offered a bullock and a ram on every altar. {15} And he said unto Balak, Stand here by thy burnt offering, while I meet the LORD yonder."

It is nearly humorous to see Balaam "separating" himself from Balak. He knows that he cannot expect to meet with God while he is in the company of Balak.

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## THE WORDS OF THE WORD

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might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live."

The Lord Jesus Christ cited this specific passage in those days when He was in the wilderness being tempted of the devil; and, in doing so, the Lord Jesus Christ applied it to what would appear on reading to be merely the words of Moses. The Lord Jesus declared by His words that those very words, individually and collectively, recorded by Moses in Deuteronomy, proceeded out of the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4). "But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Luke 4:4). "And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God."

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God," and "holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Spirit of God," that is the claim of this Book; therefore, do not shipwreck on the rocks of man contrived arguments concerning the theories of inspiration and miss anchoring in the safe harbor of the truth. We humans can become so concerned with how something happened that we forget what the something is that happened. Anchor safely and solidly in the harbor of the revelation of God Almighty that the words of this Book are to be considered as having "proceeded out of the mouth of God"; and, as such, are neither the personal remembrances of the natural memories of eye-witnesses nor the private results of investigative research of good men. All man devised theories attempting to explain how God inspired His word are exactly that, theories, useful perhaps, but not final authority. This Book does not exist because *somebody* decided to write it down and *somebody* else determined that the writing was good and another *somebody* declared that it should be compiled, and other *somebodies* decreed it canonized. Instead, God asserts, and this Book records of itself, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God," and both affirm that the very words "proceeded out of the mouth of God." This Book is here because God spoke it into existence through the instrumentality of "holy men of old."

Here, in this Book, exists not the words of the experiences of men containing somewhere within and waiting to be discovered the words of the explanations of God. This Book does not convey the words of God within the words of various men. This Book is the word of God, the whole word of God, the only word of God, and nothing but the word of God. The words are here because God spoke them into existence—they proceeded "out of the mouth of God."

Here exists the preserved record of *the one and only VERBALLY*—that is, the words were given word by word and not as thoughts—*PLENARY*—that is, each and every word was given completely—*INSPIRED*—that has to do with the origin of the words—*INFALLIBLE*—that has to do with what the words reveal, with what the words teach—*INERRANT*, that has to do with what the words declare as to facts and details of history and geography and chronology—*HOLY*, that has to do with its absolute perfection both in completeness and finality—*REVEALED*—that makes

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## THE WORDS OF THE WORD

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it clear that it came to man and did not rise from man—WORD OF THE ALMIGHTY GOD.

That truth elevates this Book to the holy and exalted position as the sole (one and only) and final (as in absolute) God-given authority for all matters of faith and practice. The honest sincere child of God seeks no other guide. No God-fearing believer should ever allow or desire any man, any group of men, any angel, any vision, any voice—whether inner or outer, any leading, any feeling, any success, or anything else that is contrary to sound doctrine to assume any authority above the authority of this Book. "Let God be true and every man a liar" (Romans 3:3).

This is the Book of God once for all delivered to the saints. God does not need to speak and He will not speak any additional new words to His child today. The Book of God is finished; it is complete. The word of God is not only THE authority; it is the FINAL authority.

The Psalms declaring, "For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations." (Psalm 100:5) "Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them forever" (Psalm 119:152). "Thy word is true from the beginning; and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever" (Psalm 119:160).

The word of God is settled not in the courts of this land, nor in the halls of academia, nor in the minds of man. It is determined not in the studies of the Hebrew and Greek scholars, nor in the assemblies of translators, nor by the counsels of preachers. It has been, is now, and forever will be, settled in Heaven. Settled there by God Himself and no other.

Never forget that the word of God is not determined in your heart or mind, by your feelings or experiences, by inner voices or outer visions, or by majority vote and general consent of the masses. "Let God be true and every man a liar." (Romans 3:4) God has given His word and it is forever settled. "For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in Heaven" (Psalm 119:89).

God will not change His word, nor will He allow it to be ignored. His word is settled. Scripture is not on trial. The final verdict has been delivered. The case is settled. Three times, ("at the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established" Deuteronomy 17:6) the Gospels (Matthew 24:35, Mark 13:31, Luke 21:33) record that solemn declaration of the Lord Jesus, "Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away." And the fourth Gospel adds the testimony of the Saviour proclaiming that (John 10:35) "the scripture cannot be broken." It is foolish to consider any suggestion to the contrary.

As it was spoken, so it was written. As it was written, so it will be accomplished. "The Scripture must be fulfilled." "What saith the Scriptures" is the question that settles all issues of faith and practice, living and dying, time and eternity. This is true whether this Book is read or ignored, followed or violated, loved or mocked. God has spoken and not one of his words will fall to the ground short of its targeted goal. Isaiah 55:11 unequivocally proclaims, "So shall my word be that goeth

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## THE WORDS OF THE WORD

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derision so as to hold up that person to scorn and contempt. It is most often a hurling back in one's face the words one has said, as when those before the cross, mocked the Lord Jesus by twisting His words. Balaam accuses his ass of disobedience of his (Balaam's) will. Balaam is angry because the ass is mocking him; that is, she is doing what Balaam has instructed her not to do, just as he is doing what God has instructed him not to do. Balaam is so angry that he wishes that he had a sword so that he could kill her. Remember, she was refusing to follow his instructions and he says she is mocking him and believes that he has the right to kill her. She was turning "out of the way." Again, I say, Balaam's ass was doing no more and no less than what Balaam himself was doing.

Suddenly, the LORD intervenes in this weird conversation.

"{31} Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and he bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face. {32} And the angel of the LORD said unto him, Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times? behold, I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me: {33} And the ass saw me, and turned from me these three times: unless she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee, and saved her alive."

The Angel of the LORD tells Balaam that his way is "perverse" or distorted in its obedience, and that He would have killed Balaam and spared the ass unless she had turned aside. Balaam ought to thank her, not abuse her. Her action saved his life.

"{34} And Balaam said unto the angel of the LORD, I have sinned; for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me: now therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again."

On the surface, Balaam now seems very sorry that he has violated the will and the word of God and is quick to say that he has sinned; yet, he continues not to understand how serious this really is, for he says, "now therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again." If the LORD is standing there with a drawn sword, ready to kill, one would think that Balaam would have no doubt but that he had displeased the LORD. Exactly how rational is it for Balaam to say "if it displease thee?" If he were in his right mind, Balaam would know that his conduct displeases the Lord, just as all those who seek "more" from the LORD than what He has already said, Balaam has become irrational.

"{35} And the angel of the LORD said unto Balaam, Go with the men: but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak. So Balaam went with the princes of Balak. {36} And when Balak heard that Balaam was come, he went out to meet him unto a city of Moab, which is in the border of Arnon, which is in the utmost coast. {37} And Balak said unto Balaam, Did I not earnestly send unto thee to call thee? wherefore camest thou not unto me? am I not able indeed to promote thee to honour? {38} And Balaam said unto Balak, Lo, I am come unto thee: have I now any power at all to say any thing?

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or to disregard it altogether.

God allowed Balaam to go; however, never forget that He had clearly instructed Balaam not to go. This does not indicate a change of mind on the part of God. Instead, God, in His sovereignty, permits Balaam to exercise his free will, choosing to obey or to violate God's certain instructions. So strongly is this freedom shown in the passage that God becomes an adversary to Balaam standing in His way because Balaam chooses to go. For Balaam to do as he wills and not to do as God wills, Balaam will have to walk around, under, over or through Almighty God. To violate the word of God is to place one in an adversarial position with God and cannot be otherwise.

"Now he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants were with him. {23} And the ass saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and the ass turned aside out of the way, and went into the field: and Balaam smote the ass, to turn her into the way."

The Angel of the LORD, a pre-incarnate appearance of the Lord Jesus, stands in the way and has His sword drawn. The ass of Balaam, quite evidently with more spiritual vision than Balaam, sees the Angel and does exactly what Balaam was doing; she turns out of the directed way of her master. This happens three times and Balaam is not pleased with the conduct of his ass.

"{24} But the angel of the LORD stood in a path of the vineyards, a wall being on this side, and a wall on that side. {25} And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she thrust herself unto the wall, and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall: and he smote her again. {26} And the angel of the LORD went further, and stood in a narrow place, where was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left. {27} And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she fell down under Balaam: and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff. {28} And the LORD opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times? {29} And Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee. {30} And the ass said unto Balaam, Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day? was I ever wont to do so unto thee? And he said, Nay."

Balaam is so angry and has so lost control of his thought process, that he conducts an "ordinary" conversation with an animal and is not at all aware of how deranged this must have appeared to his two servants and the others traveling with him. When one begins to travel the road of seeking 'more' from God, rational conduct does not remain a priority.

The ass asks Balaam why he was beating her; without the hesitation that intelligent rational thought would have produced, Balaam responds "Because thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee." To 'mock' is to caricature another's peculiarities by imitating or mimicking them in

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forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

*If I have achieved my purpose thus far, you are ready to acknowledge that words are far more than meaningful sounds, definable utterances, and melodious tones. If so, you are almost ready for the sermon.*

Words have far more than defining meanings, words have determining consequences resulting from their utterance. In particular, I am insisting that you are confronted with and accept the revealed truth that words are active and not passive. As this is true, even of our fallible words, how much more so of His infallible word?

The Word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah and emphasized this very truth (Jeremiah 23:28-29) by saying, "The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD. Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" The word of God is likened by the Word of God to a fire burning or a hammer breaking—neither example are things passive, both are things active.

H. H. Savage phrased this truth in poetic form.

*His word is like a fire consuming,*

*His word is a hammer to break;*

*His word is a sword with two edges.*

*His word like a lamp you can take.*

*His word is against the false prophets,*

*His word is opposed to all sin;*

*His word will endure forever,*

*His word will the victory win.*

*His word is both written and living,*

*His word will outlive sword and pen;*

*His word is His eternal edict,*

*His word—it is yea and amen.*

This book, the word of God, is not passive. It is active. It is alive and abides forever; it is powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow; it is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart; and it endureth forever.

This Book is not passive in saving the soul. This Book is active in salvation. "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit . . . Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (2 Peter 1:22-23). "Verily, verily, I say unto you. He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John

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5:24). "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). "Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:68).

We have been given a gospel to preach, words to say. Those words are the words of eternal life; these words alone of all the words ever spoken are able to make us wise unto salvation.

If you reject the words of the Gospel, you will be judged in eternity by the very words of the Gospel. "And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:47-48).

This Book is not passive in spiritual growth. This Book is active in producing spiritual growth, (1 Peter 2:2) "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." Spiritual growth, according to the Scripture, comes not from doing "spiritual things" or acting spiritually; instead, spiritual growth comes from the word of God.

This emphasis on the authority and the permanency and the absolute necessity of the word of God as the single means to provide both salvation and spiritual growth is not a minor, insignificant, inconsequential, theoretical concept. It is the foundational truth revealing why God gave us His word. It is "the holy Scriptures, which are able to make us wise unto salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15) and it is the Scriptures by which we are "nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine" (1 Timothy 4:6).

This Book was not given by God to be used as a decoration for a table in the front room of believers, nor as a keepsake for a bride to carry down the aisle, nor as a repository for grandma to keep family treasures, nor as a prop for the president when taking the oath of office, nor to provide a record of either family or ancient history, nor to provide moral suggestions.

This Book was given to communicate the will of God to us as it makes known the Godhead to us, exposes us to ourselves, and shows us the way of salvation. We have no other way to fully comprehend the Godhead, nor to discover what the purpose of God is in our brief temporary existence, nor to find the will of God for us in either time or eternity. We may deduce His existence and His glory through the manifestation of His creation; but we can only know His character, His attributes, His person, or His grace through His self revelation in His word. Were there no Bible, we could have no certainty of His will; we would know nothing of His grace. Were there no Bible, we could not know God.

This truth, that the Bible is the only revelation of God and His will, is so vital that this principle is established in the very first of Genesis and continued throughout all of Scripture: that is, obedience to the spoken revealed word of God always brings blessing and disobedience to the spoken revealed word of God always brings

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clearly indicate to me that Balaam personally knew the Lord.

However, regardless of one's view on Balaam's salvation, no one can question that God directly told Balaam, "Thou shalt not go with them." This should have settled the question in Balaam's heart forever. Such a "Thou shalt not" message stopped Abimelech (Genesis 20) from his wrong course of action and brought about a complete reversal of conduct. Yet, much as was the case of Jonah, the direct message did not seal the decision for Balaam though it seemed at first that he is obedient.

"[13] And Balaam rose up in the morning, and said unto the princes of Balak, Get you into your land: for the LORD refuseth to give me leave to go with you. [14] And the princes of Moab rose up, and they went unto Balak, and said, Balaam refuseth to come with us. [15] And Balak sent yet again princes, more, and more honourable than they. [16] And they came to Balaam, and said to him, Thus saith Balak the son of Zippor, Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me: [17] For I will promote thee unto very great honour, and I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me: come therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people. [18] And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the LORD my God, to do less or more."

If only the story of Balaam ended here, all would be well; but, sadly, it does not. While Balaam acknowledges that the word of God is THE authority, he fails to accept the word of God as FINAL. Instead of obedience to the revealed will of God, Balaam invites these ambassadors to remain overnight so that he might inquire if the Lord might have something 'more' to say. Having declared that he cannot "do less or more" than the word of God, Balaam, nonetheless, decides to see if the LORD cannot be persuaded to say 'more.'

"[19] Now therefore, I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the LORD will say unto me more."

Balaam considered, or hoped, that it might be possible that God could say something 'more'; that is, perhaps God will change His mind or make an exception for Balaam. Those who begin to seek 'more' from the Lord than what He has given in His word will find that they are subject to delusions by seducing spirits and the doctrines of devils.

"[20] And God came unto Balaam at night, and said unto him, If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them; but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do. [21] And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab. [22] And God's anger was kindled because he went: and the angel of the LORD stood in the way for an adversary against him."

Obedience, just as disobedience, is always a free choice. In His sovereignty, God has decreed it to be so. All humanity has the choice of blessing or curse. Adam and Eve had—and all their children have—a free will to choose to do what God has said

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## THE WORDS OF THE WORD

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This two-edged doctrine of either blessing or curse is continued throughout Scripture. There is a blessing awaiting all who obey the word of God. There is a curse awaiting all who disobey the word of God. The word of God is a two-edged sword granting blessing to those who obey and giving a curse to those who disobey.

*If I have done my job, you should understand in your heart and soul that words are important. If I have met my obligation, you know that you and I will be held accountable for all the words we say and we will answer to God for every aspect of our lives on the basis of the word of God. It is now time to make a practical application of this truth in my life and in yours by using the example of Balaam.*

Numbers chapter 22 begins the story of Balaam. Israel has arrived on the plains of Moab on their journey to the Land of Promise. Naturally, the people of Moab are greatly distressed as they face the potential of a battle with Israel. It occurs to the king that he should seek intervention from the God of the Israelites.

Balak the son of Zippor was king of the Moabites at that time and he sends messengers unto Balaam the son of Beor to Pethor, requesting that he come and, starting with verse 6,

"Curse me this people; for they are too mighty for me: peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land: for I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed. {7} And the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the rewards of divination in their hand; and they came unto Balaam, and spake unto him the words of Balak. {8} And he said unto them, Lodge here this night, and I will bring you word again, as the LORD shall speak unto me: and the princes of Moab abode with Balaam. {9} And God came unto Balaam, and said, What men are these with thee? {10} And Balaam said unto God, Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, hath sent unto me, saying, {11} Behold, there is a people come out of Egypt, which covereth the face of the earth: come now, curse me them; peradventure I shall be able to overcome them, and drive them out. {12} And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed."

I readily confess that Balaam is a strange character and difficult to understand. Good men may, and do, differ on whether Balaam was a true prophet or a charlatan. I do not wish to be dogmatic in my view; however, based upon the terms used in the Old Testament with reference to Balaam, it is my understanding that Balaam was a prophet of the LORD and that is how I must approach him in this message. He spoke of God as the LORD, the King James Version translation of the Hebrew "JEHOVAH," which is the redemptive name of God, and called this LORD "his (Balaam's) God." Balaam's last recorded statements in Numbers 24:15-19

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a curse. That is an absolute; this is universal and irrevocable in application.

While one may discuss many facets involved in the sin of Adam, his sin was no more and no less than that he disobeyed the spoken word of God. He did not do what God told him to do, instead Adam did what God told him not to do. Motive as well as enticement, inducement or seduction has nothing whatsoever to do with "what the sin is." Adam's sin was both an omission of obedience and a commission of disobedience. In exactly that light, every sin may be summarized as the failure to do what has been revealed as required of us, or the failure of doing what has been denied us. Sin is the failure to obey or the failure not to disobey. Sin is not keeping the law of God because of the failure to accept the word of God by faith. All sin is the result of a disregard, a denial, a disobedience of the spoken and recorded word of God.

Israel of old was provided a vivid demonstration of this truth. The event is recorded in Deuteronomy chapters 27 and 28. Out of Egypt, after forty years of wandering in the wilderness, Israel receives her last instructions from Moses. As we come to this chapter, we discover specific details of what Israel is to do immediately upon crossing Jordan. Again, I emphasize that this particular action was commanded to be the very first action taken after Israel entered the Promised Land.

Deuteronomy 27

"{1} And Moses with the elders of Israel commanded the people, saying, Keep all the commandments which I command you this day. {2} And it shall be on the day when ye shall pass over Jordan unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, that thou shalt set thee up great stones, and plaster them with plaster. {3} And thou shalt write upon them all the words of this law, when thou art passed over, that thou mayest go in unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, a land that floweth with milk and honey; as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee. {4} Therefore it shall be when ye be gone over Jordan, that ye shall set up these stones, which I command you this day, in mount Ebal, and thou shalt plaster them with plaster. {5} And there shalt thou build an altar unto the LORD thy God, an altar of stones: thou shalt not lift up any iron tool upon them. {6} Thou shalt build the altar of the LORD thy God of whole stones: and thou shalt offer burnt offerings thereon unto the LORD thy God: {7} And thou shalt offer peace offerings, and shalt eat there, and rejoice before the LORD thy God. {8} And thou shalt write upon the stones all the words of this law very plainly."

God commanded Israel that her first deed, after entry into the Promised Land, was to select great stones. The surfaces of the stones were to be plastered. The words of the law were then to be written, and written plainly, in that plaster covering those great stones. This was to be a permanent fixture in the land. The word of God was written, and written very plainly, upon great stones for so that all could read.

"{9} And Moses and the priests the Levites spake unto all Israel, saying, Take

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heed, and hearken, O Israel; this day thou art become the people of the LORD thy God. {10} Thou shalt therefore obey the voice of the LORD thy God, and do his commandments and his statutes, which I command thee this day."

The passage continues with further specific details. This event was intended to engrave upon the hearts of Israel the words that were engraved upon the great stones. Israel was being taught that, not only was the word of God to be recorded and to be seen, the word of God was to be read and obeyed. The passage now provides the details of an unusual ceremony. The tribes, or at least their representatives, were divided so as to stand upon two mountains and the commands were to be read showing that God promised a blessing for those who obey and that God had promised a curse for those who would dare to disobey.

"{11} And Moses charged the people the same day, saying, {12} These shall stand upon mount Gerizim to bless the people, when ye are come over Jordan; Simeon, and Levi, and Judah, and Issachar, and Joseph, and Benjamin: {13} And these shall stand upon mount Ebal to curse; Reuben, Gad, and Asher, and Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali. {14} And the Levites shall speak, and say unto all the men of Israel with a loud voice, {15} Cursed be the man that maketh any graven or molten image, an abomination unto the LORD, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and putteth it in a secret place. And all the people shall answer and say, Amen."

Then, moving to the last verse of this chapter, we find the summary of these blessings and curses.

"{26} Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen."

Israel was to understand that the blessing of God would follow the obedience of His people as surely as the curse of God shall follow their disobedience. A listing of these blessings and the curses is then provided.

Deuteronomy 28

"{1} And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: {2} And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God. {3} Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. {8} The LORD shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; and he shall bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. {9} The LORD shall establish thee an holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, and walk in his ways. . . {14} And thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day, to the right hand, or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them. {15} But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to

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## THE WORDS OF THE WORD

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observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee: {16} Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. . . {20} The LORD shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke, in all that thou settest thine hand unto for to do, until thou be destroyed, and until thou perish quickly; because of the wickedness of thy doings, whereby thou hast forsaken me. . . {45} Moreover all these curses shall come upon thee, and shall pursue thee, and overtake thee, till thou be destroyed; because thou hearkenedst not unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which he commanded thee: {46} And they shall be upon thee for a sign and for a wonder, and upon thy seed for ever. {47} Because thou servedst not the LORD thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; {48} Therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the LORD shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee. . . {58} If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD; {59} Then the LORD will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, even great plagues, and of long continuance, and sore sicknesses, and of long continuance. . . {62} And ye shall be left few in number, whereas ye were as the stars of heaven for multitude; because thou wouldest not obey the voice of the LORD thy God. {63} And it shall come to pass, that as the LORD rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you; so the LORD will rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to nought; and ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it."

This truth of an assurance of blessing for obedience and the assurance of a curse for disobedience is summarized in Deuteronomy 30:19. "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."

The truth is unavoidable. It cannot be misconstrued. The word of God was to be written very plainly upon the plaster on the face of these great stones, which were to be set in place on Mount Ebal. Israel was to read the commandments written there and to keep them. The nation was to understand that their choice was blessing or curse and that the blessing comes through their obedience, the curse through their disobedience. Obedience brings blessing and disobedience brings the curse.

If I have seemed, perhaps, to belabor this issue; it is because this is the foundation for the understanding of what God expects of His people. God requires that His word be obeyed. Remember that the word of God is the spoken word of the Eternal Word of God; therefore, it is not to be thought strange that the Heavenly Father demands, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; Hear ye him."

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